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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. President ObamaQs Nobel Speech
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Israel Hayom bannered President ObamaQs statement in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in Oslo yesterday endorsing the concept of Qjust war.Q Yediot headlined: QPeace and War Nobel.Q Maariv wrote that

Obama is fighting for peace. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe bannered:
Obama in Oslo: War Is Sometimes Necessary.

The Jerusalem Post cited the results of a survey released on Thursday and conducted by the progressive New America Foundation that Jewish Israelis are nearly evenly split in their attitudes toward President Obama, with 40% viewing him favorably and 39% viewing him unfavorably. Pollster Jim Gerstein pointed out that some have incorrectly characterized the results of an August Jerusalem Post poll as a 4% approval rating for the President. The New America Foundation poll found that the general Israeli public, by a 65 to 31 margin, believes that the U.S. is the only powerful country that Israel can count on in the world today, and that majorities fear the loss of American support in the event that Israel rejects a U.S.-sponsored peace plan.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S. was not apprised in advance of plans to place dozens of settlements in the revised national priorities map that will be brought to the cabinet on Sunday, but it has been assured that the incentives to be given in these areas will have nothing to do with housing or construction. The Jerusalem Post quoted senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that conversations had been held yesterday with Washington on the matter, and it had been explained that the national priorities map was one that took in scores of communities from around the country, and that the settlements would not be eligible for any assistance having to do with housing. The U.S. was also told that this was in no way an attempt to roll back the 10-month moratorium on housing starts. Similarly, The Jerusalem Post quoted senior government officials as saying yesterday that the establishment of a committee led by Likud Minister Benny Begin and DM Ehud Barak to take a look at how the moratorium was being implemented was not an attempt to roll back the moratorium. According to the officials, the implementation order in the government's decision to stop new housing is much stricter than the decision itself, and the committee is now trying to correct the difference, which may even entail rewriting the original order to bring it more into line with security cabinet decision. Despite these assurances, however, major media quoted Begin, who voted in favor of the 10-month construction moratorium, as saying yesterday that even with the stop-work orders, "construction continues and will continue for the next 10 months." Making his comments at a gathering in Tel Aviv, Begin said that the government had not decided on a construction freeze in the customary meaning of the term. Rather, "if we are seeking to clarify the conditions ... we are not planning on freezing life in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]." Furthermore, Begin said, "we are not discriminating between isolated settlements and those considered to be within the parameters of the agreement. Had we agreed to such a distinction, we would be, in essence, setting the borders before the start of negotiations." Begin went on to say that in the next 10 months, the population of Judea and Samaria would grow by more than 10,000 people.

Haaretz and other media reported that all Labor Party ministers are expected to vote against a proposed revision of the country's national priority zones at Sunday's cabinet meeting. The ministers are objecting to the fact that the new map confers national priority status on several isolated settlements. Designation as a national priority zone entitles a town to various economic benefits. Several Labor ministers were quoted as saying that even party chairman and DM Ehud Barak would not be able to vote for the map in its current form.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the current sense in Jerusalem is that the U.S. is scaling down its intensive involvement in the diplomatic process. The newspaper cited the feeling in Jerusalem is that Washington believed that PM Benjamin Netanyahu's moratorium would somewhat move the process along, and that when the Palestinians failed to respond positively to the move, the U.S. decided to sit back and see how things would play out.

Israel Radio reported that the international newspaper Al Hayat quoted senior Hamas members as saying that the prisoner swap with Israel will not take place, following Israel's refusal to release 100 male and female Palestinian prisoners.

The electronic media reported that last night unknown persons set

fire to the second floor of a mosque in the West Bank village of Yasuf, leaving the Hebrew inscription: QPrepare for the price-tag. Israel Radio cited the policeQs uncertainty as to whether the suspected perpetrators were settlers, but quoted Palestinian security staff as saying that residents of the radical settlement of Tapuah were behind the crime.

Israel Radio reported that the mayor of Ghajar, a village that will possibly move from Israeli to Lebanese control, refuses to let UNIFIL officials into his village. The Mayor claims that the village belongs to Syria, not Lebanon. The radio also reported on a demonstration by the village residents.

HaQaretz quoted Syrian FM Farouk Shara as saying at the BaQath convention that all Israeli PMs since 1991 have agreed to leave the Golan. HaQaretz (English Ed.) quoted Turkish journalists visiting Israel this week as saying they were "confused" by conflicting statements they heard here from senior politicians (PM Netanyahu and Deputy FM Daniel Ayalon are named) regarding Turkey's role as peace broker between Israel and Syria.

The Jerusalem Post quoted senior Israeli defense officials as saying yesterday that EgyptQs metal wall will not be deep enough to block smuggling tunnels.

Maariv reported that DM Barak wants to decrease funding for hesder yeshivas (which combine military service with religious studies).

The media cited the anger of the municipalities of Ashkelon and MaQaleh Adumim for having been excluded from the national priorities map. Media reported that the government may revise its decision on the matter.

HaQaretz reported that this week the IDF carried out two extensive drills simulating war and national emergency situations.

HaQaretz reported that Shin Bet is looking for new immigrants from Iran to offset the Islamic RepublicQs efforts to entice Israelis back to Iran or blackmail them into spying for Tehran.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF has concluded that 30 out of 36 Qmost seriousQ cases of alleged war crimes as cited by Judge Richard Goldstone in his QdamningQ report on Operation Cast Lead are Qbaseless accusations.

Leading media cited IsraelQs anger over a British government advice to retailers and importers to single out imports from settlements.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a 21-member mission of U.S. Latino leaders made a six-day visit of Israel under the auspices of the Anti-Defamation League.

Leading media reported that Israel is in the process of receiving a new generation of Hercules C-130 transport aircraft from the U.S.

Shuki Oren, the Israeli TreasuryQs Accountant General, was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that he fears for the strength of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange amid the IsraelisQ indifference to the state of their economy.

11. President ObamaQs Nobel Speech:

Block Quotes:

1I. QThe President Starts to Understand

Avraham Ben-Zvi, visiting Professor of Political Science at Haifa University and an expert in U.S.-Israel relations, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (12/11): QAfter almost a year of continued frustration and failure in diplomatic efforts to bring Iran and North Korea into the world order, yesterday the U.S. President outlined a more sobered-up, illusion-less vision. Compared to the three key speeches permeated with moderation and hope that he delivered over the past year -- the acceptance speech in Chicago,

his swearing-in address, and mostly the Cairo speech -- the Oslo speech was largely characterized by diplomatic realism and willingness (which didn't find an expression in the Cairo speech) to confront by force the challenges and the threats on his course.... Not only did he state in his speech that war as a social phenomenon was and will remain a permanent component of the international experience, but he also said that the use of force -- or the forceful and uncompromising policy of force against the Iranian and North Korean nuclear threat is an unavoidable necessity. Thus, the

U.S. President's thinking has gone a long way since he entered the White House. There is great irony in the fact that he is receiving the prestigious prize around a week after deciding on the expansion of American military in Afghanistan. International reality is indeed stronger than any dream or wish.

II. Just War Is Back

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (12/11): It has been a long time since we last heard the notion of just war. Representatives of the enlightened world, led by the Scandinavians, absolutely object to waging war. This is not an option and Obama destroyed their claims [in his Nobel speech].... Regarding the limited Israeli-Palestinian domain, Obama said in a relevant sentence: Let us focus on a more practical, more attainable peace. He was quoting the late President John Kennedy and did not actually mean Israel and the Palestinians. However, in principle, this conception can suit us and serve as a platform for all sides. Time will tell whether he will recognize over the next year the need to act in Iran in a just war.

2. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. False Altars

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/11): Thursday's main headline in The Jerusalem Post captured some of the best news of the week: Thousands rally peaceably against building freeze. Some 30,000 demonstrators, many of them young people, turned out on a chilly evening near the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem to protest the security cabinet's November 25 moratorium on new settlement construction. The assembly was a celebration of democracy. There was neither incitement nor violence. It could easily have been otherwise.... The establishment of the state means that competing centers of authority cannot be tolerated. There can be no false altars. Settler leaders are being disingenuous if they think they can turn to the High Court of Justice, appeal to public opinion, and lobby members of Knesset yet retain the right to violently confront the state if they don't get their way. While insisting settlers work within the law, we are not oblivious to the often dysfunctional nature of Israel's political system or the possibility of individual corruption. That is why we support Wednesday's Knesset vote to expedite legislative consideration of a bill that would require a national referendum prior to any withdrawals from the Golan Heights or East Jerusalem. Consideration might be given to a similar requirement for substantial withdrawals in Judea and Samaria as well. In this way, decisions about Israel's permanent borders would benefit from the unassailable legitimacy of the body politic. For now, however, the security cabinet's settlement freeze decision deserves the absolute allegiance of the governed.

II. Syria or the Palestinians?

Senior columnist and longtime peace advocate Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/11): QLike the cherry trees in Washington that bloom every year for just a few days, the subject of an agreement with Syria has bloomed annually for decades now, like a balloon that stays inflated for a few days until the air escapes. First we were dealing with Hafez Assad. Once he sat with Henry Kissinger for hours, arranging the seating at the first peace conference in Geneva, and when they parted, after Kissinger nearly burst his bladder, Assad informed him that Syria would not participate. Another time Assad went to Geneva and surprised Bill Clinton with a personal announcement that he was no longer interested in negotiating with Israel. Every time the talks with the Palestinians reach a stalemate our leaders remember that we have to reach an agreement with Syria. Now the initiator is Bashar Assad, the son. We are receiving direct messages from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The price is known and has not changed. And there is a plethora of proposals for possible long-term arrangements. But there is nothing so simple that Israel cannot make complicated. Now there is a proposal for a referendum. In real democracies there are no referendums and it is important that a golem of this kind not replace the cabinet and the Knesset.

III. QTurn Left Right Here

Political parties correspondent Yossi Verter wrote in Ha'aretz (12/11): Q[NetanyahuQs] left hand signs construction-freeze orders for the settlers, and his right hand votes for the law granting amnesty to the rioters of summer 2005. His left hand is outstretched to President Bashar Assad of Syria in a gesture of peace -- he said he was pleased to hear from French President Nicolas Sarkozy that Assad is ready to resume negotiations without preconditions -- and his right hand supports, even before such negotiations have begun, a bill that would oblige a national referendum on a withdrawal from the Golan Heights. His left hand is indicating to the whole world that this time he is serious about leading the country to a peace agreement with the Palestinians, something that would entail evacuating all the isolated settlements, and his right hand categorizes all those settlements as lying within national priority areas, meaning more money for growth. After the Netanyahu government's wobbly start in the Knesset, the opposition melted away. The government passes whatever legislation it wants.

CUNNINGHAM